

EXHIBIT B

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

**UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE CENTRAL DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA**

10

11 PAUL SAPAN, individually and on
behalf of all others similarly situated,

12 Plaintiff,

V.

14 LENDINGTREE, LLC.

15 || Defendant

Case No. 8:23-cv-00071-JWH-DFM

**ORDER GRANTING
DEFENDANT'S MOTION FOR
SUMMARY JUDGMENT [ECF
No. 48]**

1 Before the Court are four motions:

- 2 • the motion of Defendant LendingTree, LLC for summary judgment on
3 the claim for relief asserted by Plaintiff Paul Sapan;¹
4 • Sapan’s motion for class certification;²
5 • LendingTree’s motion to stay the Class Certification Motion;³ and
6 • the parties’ joint motion to modify the Court’s Scheduling Order.⁴

7 The Court concludes that these matters are appropriate for resolution without a
8 hearing. *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 78; L.R. 7-15. After considering the papers filed in
9 support and in opposition of the Motions, the Court **GRANTS** LendingTree’s
10 Motion for Summary Judgment and **DENIES** all remaining Motions as moot.

11 I. PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

12 Sapan commenced this action in January 2023.⁵ In his Complaint, Sapan
13 asserts one claim for relief under the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of
14 1991 (the “TCPA”), 47 U.S.C. §§ 227 *et seq*, on behalf of himself and all other
15 similarly situated individuals.⁶ Sapan filed an Amended Complaint in August
16 2023,⁷ and LendingTree moved to dismiss the Amended Complaint in
17
18

19 ¹ Def.’s Mot. for Summ. J. (the “Summary Judgment Motion”) [ECF
20 No. 48].

21 ² Pl.’s Mot. to Certify Class (the “Class Certification Motion”) [ECF
22 No. 49].

23 ³ Def.’s Mot. to Stay Pending Court’s Ruling on the Summary Judgment
Motion (the “Stay Motion”) [ECF No. 50].

24 ⁴ Joint Mot. to Modify the Court’s Scheduling Order (the “Joint Motion”)
[ECF No. 52].

26 ⁵ *See* Compl. [ECF No. 1].

27 ⁶ *See generally id.*

28 ⁷ *See* First Am. Compl. (the “Amended Complaint”) [ECF No. 26].

1 September 2023.⁸ The Court denied LendingTree’s Motion to Dismiss in
2 November 2023.⁹

3 LendingTree filed its instant Summary Judgment Motion in January 2025,
4 and Sapan filed his instant Class Certification Motion the same month.¹⁰ In
5 view of the Summary Judgment Motion, LendingTree also filed the instant
6 Motion to Stay Class Certification,¹¹ and the parties filed a Joint Motion to
7 modify the scheduling order.¹²

8 II. LEGAL STANDARD

9 Summary judgment is appropriate when there is no genuine issue as to
10 any material fact and the moving party is entitled to judgment as a matter of law.
11 *See Fed. R. Civ. P. 56(a).* When deciding a motion for summary judgment, the
12 court construes the evidence in the light most favorable to the non-moving
13 party. *See Barlow v. Ground*, 943 F.2d 1132, 1135 (9th Cir. 1991). However, “the
14 mere existence of *some* alleged factual dispute between the parties will not defeat
15 an otherwise properly supported motion for summary judgment; the
16 requirement is that there be no *genuine* issue of *material* fact.” *Anderson v.*
17 *Liberty Lobby, Inc.*, 477 U.S. 242, 247–48 (1986) (emphasis in original). The
18 substantive law determines the facts that are material. *See id.* at 248. “Only
19 disputes over facts that might affect the outcome of the suit under the governing
20 law will properly preclude the entry of summary judgment.” *Id.* Factual
21 disputes that are “irrelevant or unnecessary” are not counted. *Id.* A dispute

22
23 ⁸ *See* Def.’s Mot. to Dismiss Case (the “Motion to Dismiss”) [ECF
24 No. 27].

25 ⁹ *See* Minute Order re Hearing re Def.’s Mot. to Dismiss Case [ECF
26 No. 35].

27 ¹⁰ *See* Summary Judgment Motion; Class Certification Motion.

28 ¹¹ *See* Stay Motion.

29 ¹² *See* Joint Motion.

1 about a material fact is “genuine” “if the evidence is such that a reasonable jury
2 could return a verdict for the nonmoving party.” *Id.*

3 Under that standard, the moving party has the initial burden of informing
4 the court of the basis for its motion and identifying the portions of the pleadings
5 and the record that it believes demonstrate the absence of an issue of material
6 fact. *See Celotex Corp. v. Catrett*, 477 U.S. 317, 323 (1986). Where the non-
7 moving party bears the burden of proof at trial, the moving party need not
8 produce evidence negating or disproving every essential element of the non-
9 moving party’s case. *See id.* at 325. Instead, the moving party need only prove
10 that there is an absence of evidence to support the nonmoving party’s case. *See*
11 *id.*; *In re Oracle Corp. Sec. Litig.*, 627 F.3d 376, 387 (9th Cir. 2010). The party
12 seeking summary judgment must show that “under the governing law, there can
13 be but one reasonable conclusion as to the verdict.” *Anderson*, 477 U.S. at 250.

14 If the moving party sustains its burden, the non-moving party must then
15 show that there is a genuine issue of material fact that must be resolved at trial.
16 *See Celotex*, 477 U.S. at 324. A genuine issue of material fact exists “if the
17 evidence is such that a reasonable jury could return a verdict for the non-moving
18 party.” *Anderson*, 477 U.S. at 248. “This burden is not a light one. The non-
19 moving party must show more than the mere existence of a scintilla of
20 evidence.” *Oracle Corp. Sec. Litig.*, 627 F.3d at 387 (citing *Anderson*, 477 U.S. at
21 252). The non-moving party must make that showing on all matters placed at
22 issue by the motion as to which it has the burden of proof at trial. *See Celotex*,
23 477 U.S. at 322; *Anderson*, 477 U.S. at 252.

24 Furthermore, a party “may object that the material cited to support or
25 dispute a fact cannot be presented in a form that would be admissible in
26 evidence.” Fed. R. Civ. P. 56(c)(2). “The burden is on the proponent to show
27 that the material is admissible as presented or to explain the admissible form that
28 is anticipated.” Advisory Committee Notes, 2010 Amendment, to

1 Fed. R. Civ. P. 56. Reports and declarations in support of an opposition to
2 summary judgment may be considered only if they comply with Rule 56(c) of the
3 Federal Rules of Civil Procedure, which requires that they “be made on
4 personal knowledge, set forth facts that would be admissible evidence, and show
5 affirmatively that the declarant is competent to testify to the matters stated
6 therein.” *Nadler v. Nature’s Way Prod., LLC*, 2015 WL 12791504, at *1 (C.D.
7 Cal. Jan. 30, 2015); *see also Loomis v. Cornish*, 836 F.3d 991, 996–97 (9th Cir.
8 2016) (noting that hearsay statements do not enter into the analysis on summary
9 judgment).

10 **III. STATEMENT OF UNCONTROVERTED MATERIAL FACTS**

11 The material facts set forth below are sufficiently supported by admissible
12 evidence, and they are uncontested. Those facts are “admitted to exist
13 without controversy” for the purpose of deciding LendingTree’s Summary
14 Judgment Motion. *See* Fed. R. Civ. P. 56(e)(2); L.R. 56-3.

15 LendingTree operates a pay-per-call program that permits marketing
16 affiliates who place telemarketing calls to consumers to transfer those calls to
17 LendingTree.¹³ The marketing affiliates are third-party contractors, and they
18 are not required to transfer calls exclusively to LendingTree.¹⁴ LendingTree
19 does not restrict its affiliates from calling into California, nor does it provide any
20 oversight of its marketing affiliates.¹⁵

21 In January 2019, LendingTree received a telephone call as part of its pay-
22 per-call program.¹⁶ LendingTree’s employee, April Ellis (now a former
23
24

25 ¹³ Joint Statement [ECF No. 48-2] No. 8.

26 ¹⁴ *Id.* at No. 13.

27 ¹⁵ *Id.* at Nos. 35 & 42.

28 ¹⁶ *Id.* at Nos. 1 & 7.

1 employee), answered the call.¹⁷ She spoke to the transferring caller for
2 39 seconds, and she did not speak to Sapan.¹⁸ The call disconnected after
3 Ms. Ellis was introduced to Sapan, and Ms. Ellis did not attempt to call Sapan
4 back.¹⁹

5 Following that call, Sapan received nine calls from a telephone number
6 that was listed as 949-312-4532.²⁰ The entity placing those calls was identified as
7 National Mortgage Advantage, and Sapan believes that it was trying to
8 reconnect him to LendingTree.²¹ LendingTree does not operate under the name
9 “National Mortgage Advantage,” and it has no relationship with any entity
10 known as “National Mortgage Advantage.”²²

11 IV. ANALYSIS

12 The primary dispute in this case is whether LendingTree could be liable
13 for the calls that were placed to Sapan.²³ Under Ninth Circuit precedent,
14 LendingTree cannot.

15 The TCPA makes it “unlawful for any person within the United States,
16 or any person outside the United States if the recipient is within the United
17 States—(A) to make any call (other than a call made for emergency purposes or
18 made with the prior express consent of the called party) using any automatic
19 telephone dialing system . . . (iii) to any . . . cellular telephone service.” 47
20 U.S.C. § 227(b)(1)(A)(iii). Per Federal Communications Commission

21 ¹⁷ *Id.* at No. 2.

22 ¹⁸ *Id.* at Nos. 4 & 5.

23 ¹⁹ *Id.* at No. 6.

24 ²⁰ *Id.* at Nos. 47 & 48.

25 ²¹ *Id.* at No. 53.

26 ²² *Id.* at Nos. 18 & 20.

27 ²³ *See generally* Summary Judgment Motion; Pl.’s Opp’n to the Summary
28 Judgment Motion (the “Opposition”) [ECF No. 56].

1 regulations, “[c]alls placed by an agent of the telemarketer are treated as if the
2 telemarketer itself placed the call.” *In re Rules & Regs. Implementing the TCPA of*
3 *1991*, 10 FCC Rcd. 12391, 12397 (1995). To decide whether an agency
4 relationship exists, a district court must apply traditional tort principles. *See*
5 *Kristensen v. Credit Payment Servs. Inc.*, 897 F.3d 1010, 1014 (9th Cir. 2018).

6 The Ninth Circuit has held that marketing affiliates like those in
7 LendingTree’s pay-per-call program do not constitute agents for the purpose of
8 TCPA liability. In *Jones v. Royal Administration Services, Inc.*, 887 F.3d 443 (9th
9 Cir. 2018), the defendant vehicle service contract provider entered into a
10 marketing contract with telemarketer AAAP. *See id.* at 446. Through that
11 program, AAAP would first “sell the concept of a vehicle service contract to the
12 consumer.” *Id.* (alterations adopted). Then, AAAP would “pick a particular
13 service plan from one of their many vendors” and transfer the consumer to that
14 vendor. *Id.* The Ninth Circuit held that the defendant could not be held
15 vicariously liable for AAAP’s TCPA violations because AAAP was an
16 “independent business” that “provided its own equipment, set its own hours,
17 and only received payment if one of its telemarketers actually made a sale” and
18 because the defendant “did not specifically control the calls” to the plaintiff. *Id.*
19 at 453.

20 As in *Jones*, here no basis exists upon which LendingTree could be
21 vicariously liable for the calls placed by National Mortgage Advantage to Sapan.
22 Indeed, Sapan’s only argument to the contrary appears to be his assertion that
23 “National Mortgage Advantage” is a “fake name used by one of the
24 telemarketers hired by LendingTree.”²⁴ Such bold, unsupported assertions are
25 insufficient to create a genuine dispute of fact. Moreover, even if Sapan is
26 correct that “National Mortgage Advantage” is a fake name used by one of
27

28 ²⁴ *See* Opposition 4:13–16.

1 LendingTree's marketing affiliates, it is undisputed that those calls were not
2 made at LendingTree's direction, that LendingTree did not influence or control
3 its marketing affiliates, and that the marketing affiliate was an independent
4 business.²⁵ *See Jones*, 887 F.3d at 453.

5 In sum, there is no genuine dispute regarding whether LendingTree could
6 be vicariously liable for any TCPA violation committed by the entity that called
7 Sapan, whether or not that entity was one of LendingTree's marketing affiliates.
8 *See id.* Accordingly, the Court **GRANTS** LendingTree's Summary Judgment
9 Motion.

10 **V. DISPOSITION**

11 For the foregoing reasons, the Court hereby **ORDERS** as follows:

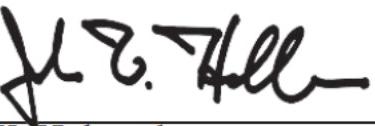
12 1. LendingTree's Summary Judgment Motion [ECF No. 48] is
13 **GRANTED**.

14 2. Sapan's Class Certification Motion [ECF No. 49], LendingTree's
15 Stay Motion [ECF No. 50], and the Joint Motion to modify the scheduling order
16 [ECF No. 52] are each **DENIED as moot**.

17 3. Judgment shall issue accordingly.

18 **IT IS SO ORDERED.**

19 Dated: March 18, 2025


John W. Holcomb
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE

20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28 ²⁵ *See* Joint Statement Nos. 9, 19, 20, & 26.